

A Short Tour of

# The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels



Los Angeles



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2002  
The Cathedral of  
Our Lady  
of the Angels

Los Angeles

Mary-Cabrini Durkin



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# *Welcome!*

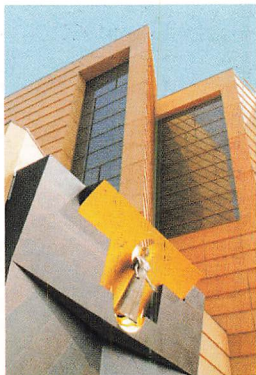
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**W**elcome to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels!

This mother church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, also a local parish, opens its arms to all. The foundation stone repeats the prophet Isaiah's words, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7).

We invite you to make your visit a pilgrimage, a spiritual journey. Perhaps you have come up the escalators from the underground parking garage. Perhaps you have passed through the Temple Street Entrance Gateway, recalling the Good Shepherd's words, "I am the gate for the sheep" (John 10:7). Jesus is our doorway to fullness of life.

Join the many visitors and worshipers who come into these 5.6 acres of sacred space seeking the life of the spirit, seeking God.





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# *Self-guided tour*

## *The Journey Begins*

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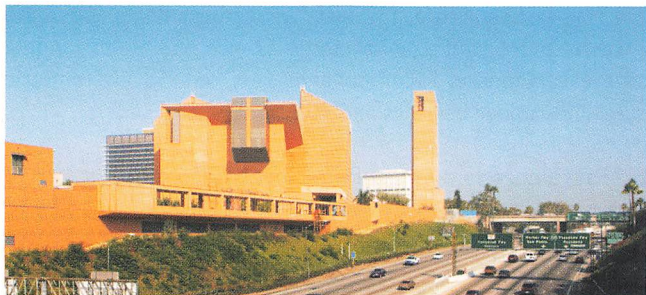


**I**n the midst of the busy city, on the edge of the rushing Hollywood Freeway, the 2.5-acre plaza offers peace and refreshment.

The 37-bell carillon along Temple Street reminds us of the bells which rang out the rhythms of mission life and worship in early California.

Artist Lita Albuquerque designed the lower plaza's cascading **Gateway Pool and Water Wall** (1), which recalls Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman, "I shall give you living water" (John 4:14, inscribed in the numerous languages currently used in the Archdiocese).

The cathedral complex incorporates the beautiful cultural diversity of this Archdiocese.



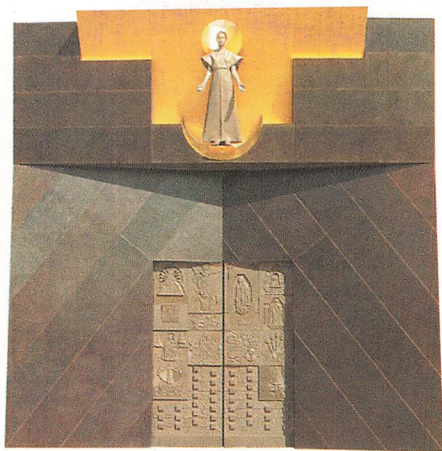
The cathedral rises in powerful blocks of architectural concrete. Soft earthen tones evoke the spirit of early California's adobe mission churches. The dramatic angular structure catches sunlight and casts shadows along the building's surface in ever-moving patterns. This use of light to mold planes and inner spaces is characteristic of the cathedral's architect, Professor José Rafael Moneo of Madrid, Spain. The blocks absorb Southern California's rich gift of sunlight and radiate it as warmth.

The 60-foot cross above you is visible for miles. At night, the window is lighted from within and becomes a lantern of faith in Jesus Christ.

Visible behind the glass exterior windows, wide panels of alabaster form the interior windows, at 27,000 square feet, the largest architectural use of alabaster in the world. This precious stone is quarried from the depths of the earth. When sliced into thin, translucent pieces fastened together, it provides a soft and luminous quality to the interior.

This vast structure, 132 feet high, actually floats above the earth. It is designed to withstand a 27-inch lateral motion in a severe earthquake. Slider columns rest on 158 elastometric steel-and-rubber bearings and 40 stainless-steel sliders.

Pass alongside the King Palm trees, symbolizing royalty and immortality.



Approach the **Great Bronze Doors** (2), 30 feet high. Above, Our Lady welcomes you. Natural light forms the halo around her head. Her face reflects features of all races.

The Mother of God is the mother of all peoples. Designs on the doors portray symbols indigenous to diverse cultures. Among these are several depictions of Mary. Robert Graham is the artist.





# *South Ambulatory* *Walk of Faith*

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Enter the **south ambulatory** (walkway) (3). A future mural on the left wall will depict the growth of Catholic faith in Southern California. It will be intentionally incomplete. The Church walks a pilgrimage through time, a story to be lived out and pictured here by future generations. We all journey through the time of our own lives, accompanied by the whole human family.

Along the right side are small shrine chapels for private prayer. The first is the **Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament** (4). At each Eucharist, bread and wine are consecrated with Jesus' words, "This is my body,...this is my blood." Afterwards, some of the consecrated bread, now Christ's body, is reserved for private devotion and to be taken to the sick and/or dying



members of the community. Max De Moss designed the tabernacle. *You are welcome to enter this chapel. Please do so in silence and a spirit of prayer.*

Another chapel, dedicated to Mary, features a statue of Our Lady of the Angels sculpted by Professor E. Pattarino.

The other chapels will be dedicated and furnished at a later time. Every great cathedral is a work in progress, developing through generations.

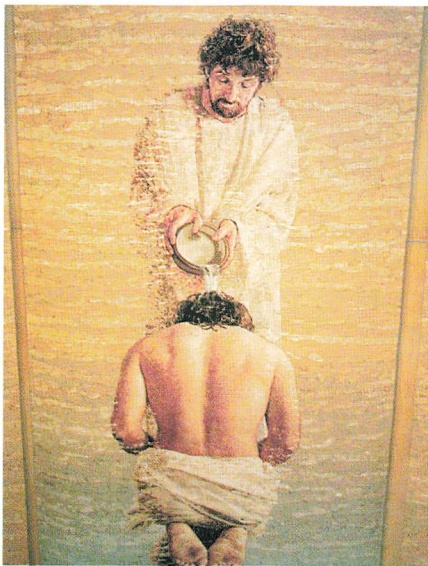
At the end of the ambulatory (5) is a Spanish Baroque **retablo** (decorated panel) originally erected in the Chapel of the Congregation of St. Philip Neri in Ezcaray, Spain in 1687.



# *Cathedral Interior*

## *A Great Light*

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Our journey has led us to the **baptistery** (6), appropriately located at the entry to the church. The font was designed by Richard Vosko, the liturgical art consultant for the cathedral. Through the sacrament of Baptism we enter into the life of Christ and into the Christian community. You may wish to bless yourself with the holy water. The granite pool is 2.5 feet deep.

Five cotton-and-viscose tapestries behind the pool, designed by John Nava, were digitally woven in Bruges, Belgium. They depict the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan.

The nearby ambry made by Jefferson Tortorelli is a case holding sacred oils for sacramental anointings.

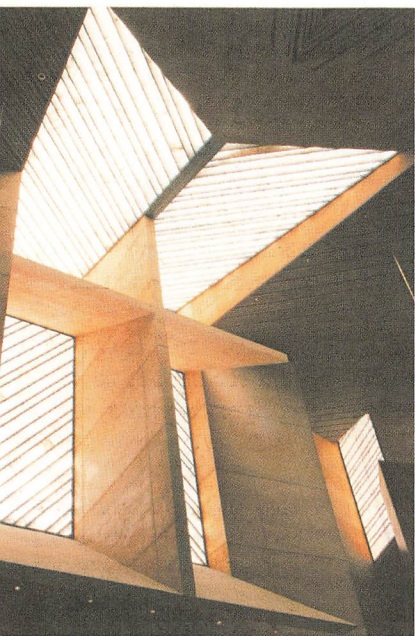
Turning to the vast nave (333 feet long, 132 feet high), stand in silence to absorb its light and space. No pillars block your views, because chapel structures on each side support the roof.

Seating can accommodate 2,500 to 3000 people.

A dynamic effect results from a design which avoids right angles and symmetry. The wooden ceiling's many patterns draw the eye into combinations which are never completely resolved. Yet warm earth tones provide a restful embrace, harmonizing energy with peace.

The structure is of human fabrication. The light which fills it is the creation of God. Light is a symbol of God's grace, God's presence. "God is Light, in whom there is no darkness." Just as the eye searches for light in darkness, just as the heart takes joy in sunshine, the human spirit longs for God's grace and rejoices in it.

Filtered through translucent alabaster windows, light molds the space and heightens textures. Variegated alabaster was chosen to create a quasi-mosaic effect. As the sun moves from



east to west, the light in the cathedral moves, takes on different tonalities; it shapes and reshapes the inner space.

Protective exterior glass contributes a chevron pattern for further texture.

In traditional style, the cathedral faces east, the direction of Jerusalem, the holy city, and of the rising sun. Advent prayers invoke Jesus as the “Rising Dawn.” Morning light enters the cathedral through the great **alabaster window** (7) above the altar. Its huge architectural cross, also visible from the plaza, is fastened into the building’s structure yet seems to float on the right. Light pours into the church along the slanted crossbeam, this emblem of Christ, “the Light of the world” (John 8:12).



Little artificial light is needed. Fixtures suspended from the ceiling serve a dual purpose. The trumpet in the center of each contains a sound speaker.



John Nava's **tapestries** line the side walls, 14 on the south (right) (8a), 11 on the north (left) (8b). Each portrays a grouping of Christians called "Saint" or "Blessed." These holy people are models of goodness, our ancestors in the Faith and our friends in heaven.

Together the 25 tapestries represent the Communion of Saints. The saints surround the worshipping community and represent the oneness of all the baptized around the Eucharistic table, as "we join the angels and the saints in proclaiming your glory..." (Preface of the Mass).



These 133 figures are drawn from all races, all ages, all continents and many occupations and vocations, from the apostles and martyrs of the early Church to Mother Teresa of Calcutta and saints of the Americas. Their holiness showed itself in loving deeds. Eight untitled figures represent the many anonymous holy people, perhaps you.

The saints have walked before us and encourage us on our path through time to eternity.

The seven Nava tapestries behind the altar are based on images from the Book of Revelation and depict the local Church as a component of the New Jerusalem.

As you move forward, the slope of the floor leads you from the baptismal font to the altar table. The grade allows the whole assembly to see and to feel a part of the services.

The 60,000 Spanish Jana limestone paving stones have a circular pattern centered at the altar. We are drawn toward the focal point of the most holy act of Catholic worship, the Eucharist. The area around the altar is called the **sanctuary** (9).



Space behind the altar provides seating for clergy and others during liturgy. Two transepts (side extensions), on either side of the sanctuary, allow the assembly to gather around the altar. This cruciform structure is traditional in Catholic churches and represents the cross on which Jesus died.

A larger-than-life bronze *corpus* (Latin for “body”) hangs on the moveable cross in the sanctuary. The artist is Simon Toparovsky.



The **altar** is fixed in place (10), its over five tons structurally supported from below. Two pieces of Rosso Laguna marble, quarried in Turkey, are the *mensa* (table-top) and a round base. Four bronze angels affixed around the base look up with a mystic gaze, kneeling in reverence for the divine presence upon the altar. Cardinal Roger Mahony designed the altar. The gold-clad angels were designed by M. L. Snowden.

The source and summit of Catholic liturgy (public worship) is the Eucharist (Greek for “thanks-giving”). Around the altar, priest and assembly remember once again Jesus’ life, passion, death and resurrection. We gather around the altar as both the banquet table of the Lord and the stone of his sacrifice.

At the **ambo** (11) to the right of the altar, the words of sacred scripture are proclaimed, and God’s Spirit speaks to “those who have ears to hear.” The ambo can be adjusted to provide barrier-free access for readers. It was designed by Jefferson Tortorelli.

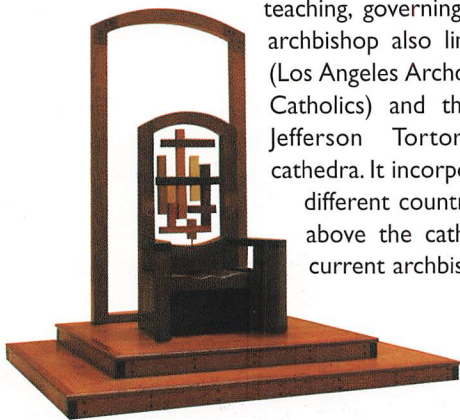
The features of the sanctuary remind us of Christ’s presence in the community, in the priest-celebrant, in the Scriptures, and in the consecrated bread and wine received in Communion.

The angel motif is repeated in the twelve dedication candle-holders designed by Max DeMoss, each with distinctive features. Angelic figures have a special place in this Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, in this city of Los Angeles. These spiritual beings, part of God’s creation, lift our minds from the here-and-now of earthly life and make us aware of a spiritual realm.



We recall that Mary's life-journey began with God's invitation announced by the angelic messenger Gabriel (Luke 2:26). She was asked to collaborate with God in the great mission of redemption by bearing and rearing the Savior of the world. Her journey passed through joys and tears.

Every cathedral is so called from the **cathedra** (Latin for "chair") (12). From this formal seat, to the left of the altar, the archbishop exercises his leadership responsibilities of teaching, governing, and sanctifying. The archbishop also links the local Church (Los Angeles Archdiocese of 4,000,000+ Catholics) and the Church Universal. Jefferson Tortorelli designed the cathedra. It incorporates wood from ten different countries. The coat of arms above the cathedra belongs to the current archbishop.



Built for this space, the Dobson pipe **organ** rises five stories high in the right transept (13). It provides music for the liturgy, supporting the assembly's sung prayer. The instrument's 6,019 metal and wooden pipes, with 104 stops, stand behind a cherry-wood screen and the 4-manual console. Some vintage pipes came from the former cathedral's Wanergin and Austin



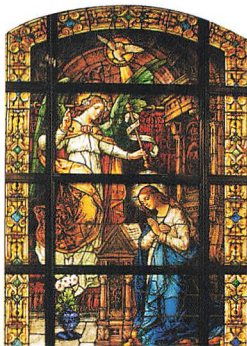


organs. The longest pipe, 40 feet tall, is visible on the right. The choir sits below the organ.

You can see a gallery above the baptistery and along the sides. It accommodates the media without distracting the assembly from prayer.

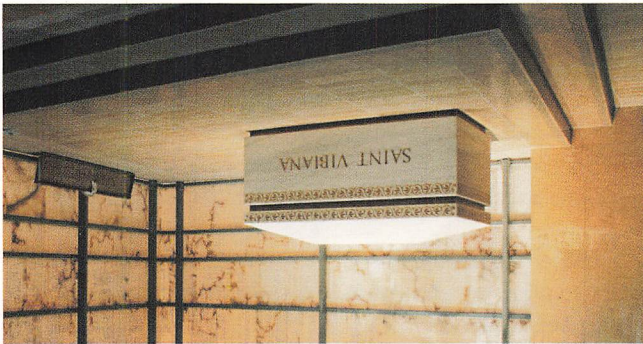
Walking back along the north aisle, you will be able to examine more closely the tapestries which hang along the north wall (8b).

At the back of the aisle, turn right into the **north ambulatory (14)** to visit the lower level, including windows from the former cathedral.



St. Vibiana was an ancient Roman martyr. She is the patron saint of the Archdiocese. The refurbished original altar from the former St. Vibiana Cathedral features the Lamb of God, an image of Jesus the innocent victim. To him the martyrs are loyal

A staircase (or elevator – make a sharp left) will take you down to the Chapel of St. Vibiana and to the Cathedral Mausoleum. (Restroom at the foot of the stairs, sharp left.) At the foot of the stairs, go forward; on your right you will find the chapel.

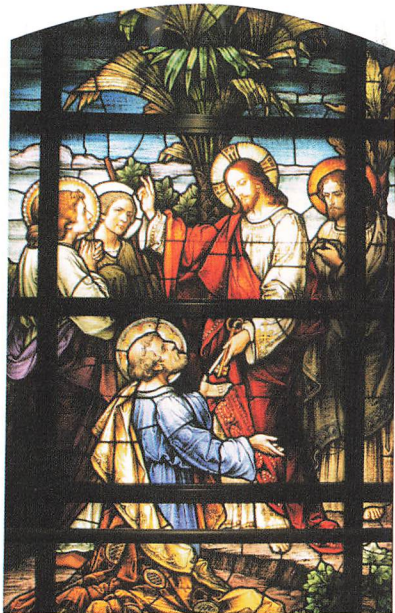


## *Chapel of St. Vibiana and Mausoleum Resurrection and Life*

witnesses. The new image of Christ's Resurrection was designed to match the fourteen Stations of the Cross by Pattarino.

Returning to the hallway, turn right to the shrine containing Saint Vibiana's relics. From earliest Christian times, the bodies of the saints have been revered. Mass was often celebrated near their burial places in a relationship that extends beyond death. The martyrs' faith and courage strengthened the living, who still faced persecution. Many ancient churches were built over such burial places.

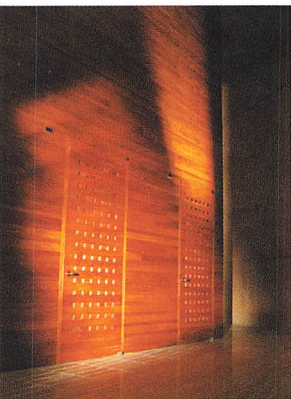
Along the hallways of the mausoleum are the backlit stained-glass windows of the former cathedral. The German-style windows, with figures painted on glass segments, were imported from the Mayer Brothers Studios in Munich in 1922.



# *North Ambulatory, Chapel of Reconciliation*

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**R**eturn upstairs by the stairs or elevator to the **north Ambulatory (14)**. You can see the Meditation Garden, accessible from the plaza. The chapels, like those in the south ambulatory, will be dedicated in the future.



The last chapel is open, and you are welcome to enter (15). *You are asked to respect the silent, prayerful atmosphere.* This **Chapel of Reconciliation** is dedicated to the Sacrament of Penance. You may wish to pause here. This chapel offers a room for prayer and meditation as well as rooms for confession. You can choose screen-separated or face-to-face alternatives. The priest extends God's forgiveness, as the risen Jesus instructed the disciples,

*"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven..."* (John 20:23).

Exit the cathedral through the northeast door ahead of you.

# *Meditation Garden*

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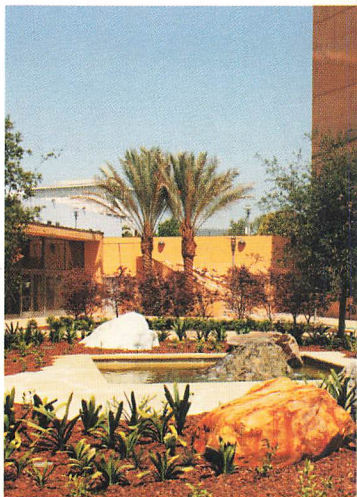
Turn left to enter the **Meditation Garden (16)**. The temple built by human hands is complemented by the natural beauty of Queen, Date and other palms, Japanese maples, other trees and plants and a quiet circular pool. Stations of the Cross will be placed here to invite meditation on Jesus' suffering and death.

The Native American Memorial created by Johnny Bear Contreras honors California's native heritage.

Eighteen bells will ring out from the 156-foot campanile, topped by a 26-foot cross. Two bells are from the former cathedral. Four base isolators provide earthquake protection.

Take your time to use this garden for your own reflection. Absorb your experience of the cathedral. Savor its beauty. Ponder its message to you.

When you are ready, return to the Grand Plaza.





# Plaza of the People

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On your left (17) is a shrine to **Our Lady of Guadalupe**, patroness of the Americas. Mary, Jesus' mother, appeared to Saint Juan Diego at Tépeyac Hill near Mexico City in 1531. Làlo Garcia created the shrine in *talavera* (ceramic tile).

Center mural: A digitized reproduction of the original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, mounted upon a stylized *tilma* (cloak); Aztec and Spanish angels symbolizing

the encounter of the two cultures. Left: Saint Juan Diego. Right: "Angelinos" mural depicting children of our culturally diverse city.

The reverse of the niche projects over the Hollywood Freeway, where a 12-foot-high image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is visible to motorists.

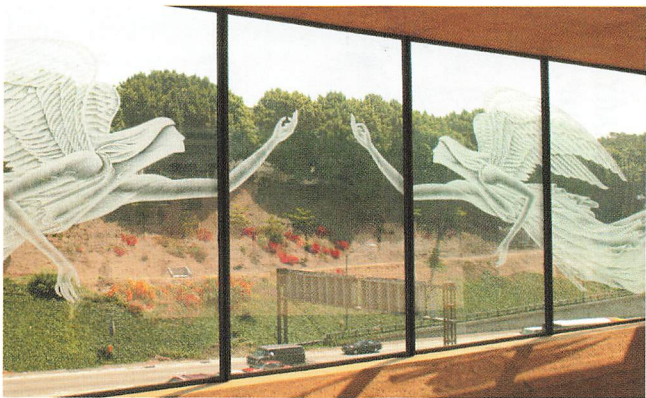
To the right, the **donor colonnade** is inscribed with angelic figures and the names of many generous donors. The horizontal

and lightly sketched angels give a sense of air and flight. The wall also serves as a buffer of freeway sounds.

At the end of the colonnade are an olive grove and a children's play area. This beautiful Jerusalem stone fountain is a gift of the Skirball Foundation meant to celebrate the historic bonds between Judaism and Catholicism.

The plaza accommodates 5000 people for outdoor events.

The private **residence** of the cathedral priests and the Archbishop of Los Angeles is at the northeast corner. The larger building to its right is the Center at Cathedral Plaza, including offices, outreach to the poor and space for conferences and presentations. Please enter from the plaza level to enjoy the Cafe and to browse in the Gift Shop.



# *Cathedral Prayer Life*

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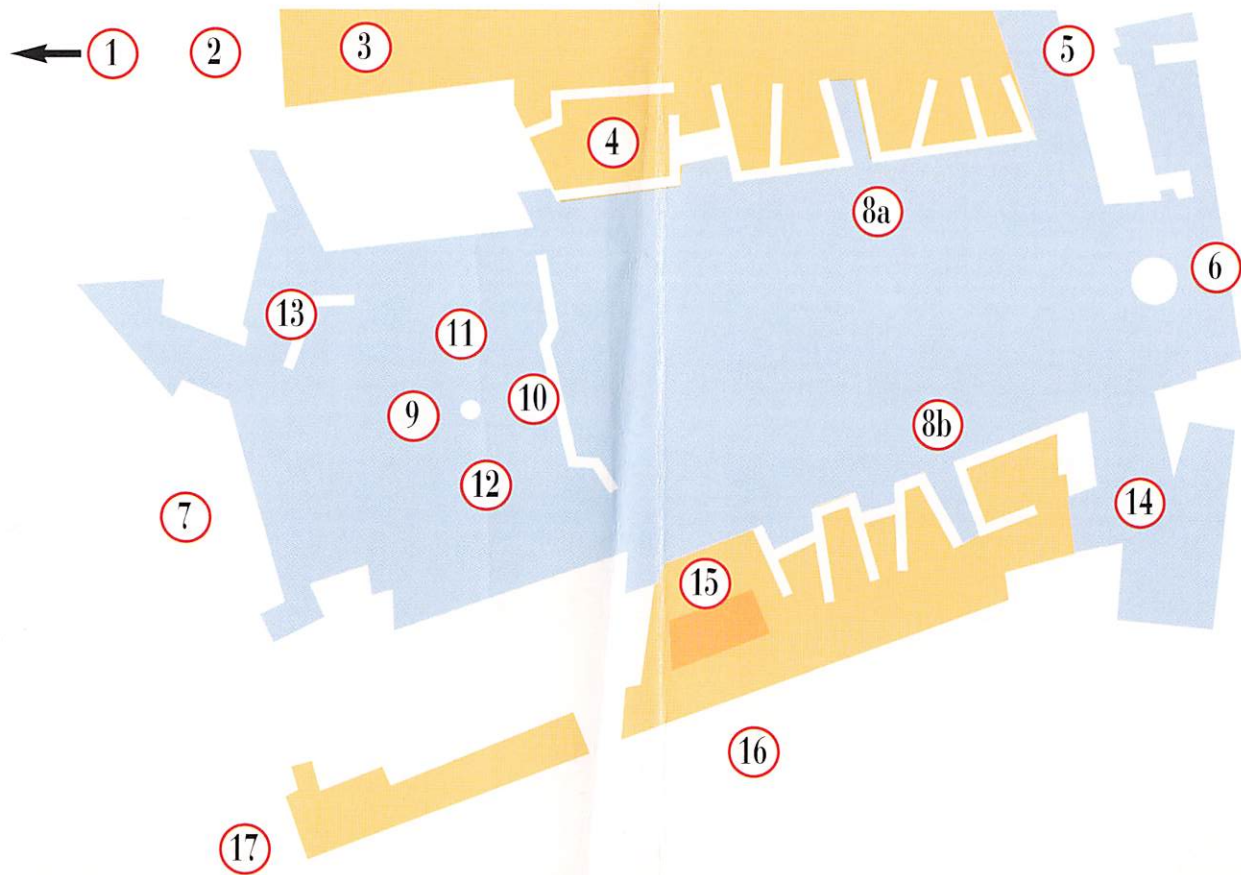
**T**he cathedral is open to the entire archdiocese and to the civic community as a center of prayer, celebration, and shared observances, on occasions of joy and of grief.

Join the cathedral's community of prayer for the Eucharist on weekdays as well as on Sundays and great feasts. Come in the quiet of the early morning to begin your day with Morning Praise. (Check current schedules.) You are always welcome!

*We hope that your journey through the cathedral complex has been uplifting, renewing, and spiritually enriching. May you walk in the light, letting your light shine before all (Matthew 5:16)! Please come back.*

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